



Ned Lamont  
Governor

## STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



Rollin Cook  
Commissioner

Good Morning Representatives Stafstrom and Rebimbas and Senators Winfield and Kissel, I am Rollin Cook, Commissioner of the Department of Correction (DOC), and I am here to testify in support of Governor Lamont's proposal, An Act Concerning Fair Futures Following Erasure Of Criminal Records - House Bill 5019 and of "Clean Slate" legislation and concept.

The sole mission of our agency is to operate humane and safe correctional institutions and provide rehabilitation through evidence-based reentry programs. This assists Returning Citizens in being successful back in our cities and towns and in having healthy lifestyles.

We recently unveiled our new strategic plan which clearly outlines this vision through the categories of our work, programs, services, future, people - with the understanding that we approach all that we do with Human Dignity.

We believe this treatment model assists people to live as law-abiding citizens. However, the harsh reality is that even with perfect preparedness, there are obstacles working against a successful transition.

Although reentry is a complicated and multi-layered process, two common obstructions are access to housing and employment. Since Governor Lamont selected me as DOC Commissioner, our Department has increased its efforts to assist Returning Citizens in obtaining both by actively engaging with our community providers, advocacy groups and other state agencies.

We also know that the stigma associated with a criminal record and history of incarceration is often the actual roadblock. As a department, we have worked tirelessly to minimize barriers, however, a rap sheet in many ways becomes a permanent scar to someone that has already fulfilled their legal obligation to the courts who imposed their sentence.

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We believe in the philosophy behind Clean Slate legislation. Clean Slate is in line with our mission, our vision and our strategic plan. Based on our work with the Governor's Office, we are confident that this legislation will reduce or remove some challenges returning citizens face. Clean Slate gives the people of our state a fighting chance. Criminal records should still serve a purpose - the question will be: who needs access and why. We believe that one's criminal record in its entirety will still hold critical value to our agency, ensuring that everyone under our supervision has an accurate risk score and is getting the appropriate programs focused on their criminogenic needs. In addition, release decisions rely on objective classification that takes into account one's complete history.

Again, I believe that we can carve out exemptions that serve a meaningful purpose, while maintaining language that will assist with the reentry process.

My home state of Utah is living proof that this can work. State Representative Eric Hutchings, a man I know and a Republican elected official I have collaborated with on many projects, supported the Clean Slate efforts which were enacted last year. He was quoted in The Salt Lake Tribune as stating, "The Clean Slate Law gives our citizens a means of efficiently expunging records of old convictions or arrests for low-level, non-violent crimes, without forcing individuals to jump through a series of expensive and cumbersome bureaucratic hoops."

In the end, it is simple - It's time to give people who have paid their debt to society the chance to move on and leave their past behind.

I thank the Committee for allowing me to testify in support of the clean slate legislation put forward in Governor Lamont's Fair Futures bill and I will be happy to answer your questions.